

of in this country. Let's not tax this industry to where it decimates it, to where there are no jobs in this country, to where America has to seek these precious metals and hard metals overseas.

We believe that what you have got today is a circumstance where the new Democrat majority can't wait to tax this industry at 8 percent, which will see the industry go into demise. We think that is an obvious plan that they have had. They didn't just pull this out. This is something that they have had, been working on a long time.

The Republican Party opposes this new tax. We oppose the diminishment of the industry. We oppose what will eventually happen as a result of American manufacturers having to go overseas to seek new markets, many times countries which are not close friends and allies of the United States. We see a day when we will not only lose jobs but will be held hostage for the precious minerals that we need, which will provide not only our country the things it needs but perhaps the military and our industrial complex with the things that will keep America strong.

We oppose this bill. I believe that what you have heard today is not only Members state that equivocally, but we will continue to say to the Members who are listening to this argument, please vote "no" on the rule, and please vote "no" on the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from West Virginia, chairman of the Committee on Natural Resources, Mr. RAHALL.

Mr. RAHALL. I first thank the gentlelady from California (Ms. MATSUI) and the Rules Committee for fashioning a rule today which provides for a free and open debate on a historic measure, refining the Mining Law of 1872.

I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) who has so ably taken the reins of leadership on the Subcommittee on Mines and Minerals, a subcommittee I once chaired over 20 years ago. We had extensive hearings at that time across the country, including in Alaska. And the gentleman from California has conducted himself in the same fashion and with the same knowledge of this bill. I certainly thank him for his help.

This legislation, it should be noted, is sponsored by, or, rather, enjoys the support of a number of Members from both sides of the aisle and from all political persuasions. It should be noted that Members from mining States affected by this legislation support this bill, including the gentlelady from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS), who just spoke.

The rule does make a number of amendments sponsored by Members from the other side of the aisle in order that touch upon key features of the legislation. Indeed, the Rules Committee was very generous, extremely generous to the other side.

We are going to have a vote on the amendment today that will continue the 19th century practice, for example, of giving away mineral-rich public lands, the deed of which lies with all American citizens, for \$2.50 an acre. That is an amendment that we will debate at the proper time. I say to my colleagues that this is not a Democrat or a Republican issue. It is a non-partisan issue. It is bipartisan. Indeed, similar legislation has passed this body, not this Congress, but previous Congresses, by large, overwhelming margins.

We are dealing with a law that has been relatively unchanged that was enacted when Ulysses S. Grant resided in the White House. Union troops still occupied the South. The invention of the telephone and Custer's stand at Little Bighorn were still 4 years away.

In 1872, Congress passed a law that allowed people to go on to public lands in the West, stake mining claims, and if any gold or silver were found, mine it for free or to purchase those claim mine lands for as little as \$2.50 an acre.

Let me speak for a moment on the process leading up to our consideration of this matter; a fair process, I might add. The genesis of H.R. 2262 dates back to 1879, 7 years after the enactment of the mining law of 1872. At that time, Congress created the first major public land commission to investigate land policy in the West. One of its major recommendations included a thorough rewrite of the 1872 law, which, even then, was believed by many to undermine efficient mineral development.

Several decades later, in 1908, President Roosevelt created the National Conservation Commission to study Federal land policy in the West, and it, too, made a number of recommendations for reforming the mining law.

Again, in 1921, a committee appointed by the Director of the Bureau of Mines recommended a series of reforms developed in concert with mining industry representatives interested in improving the mechanics of the law. Following this effort, the next call for reform came at the onset of World War II, when then Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, endorsed a leasing system for hardrock mining.

In 1949, the Hoover Commission recommended a series of changes to the mining law. This effort was succeeded by the President's Materials Policy Commission in 1952, which also recommended revisions, including placing hardrock minerals under a leasing system.

Once again, the criticism centered on inefficiencies in mineral development caused by the law. Beginning in 1964 and 1977, Congress went through another period of debate on the mining law reform until 1977, when efforts collapsed.

In 1985, this gentleman from West Virginia became Chair of the Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, and delved into the matter. I conducted a large number of hearings,

including in four western States. It was not until 1992 that I brought a bill to the House floor for consideration.

Following that effort, on November 18, 1993, the House passed my bill by a vote of 316-108. Unfortunately, during that 103rd Congress, a House-Senate conference committee on mining law reform was unable to reach a final agreement.

We were then shut out, locked down on the consideration of any meaningful mining law reform during the 12 years of a Republican majority in this body. This Congress, the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) became the chairman of the subcommittee that I once chaired and took up the reform banner. He held a number of hearings, took testimony from 33 witnesses, and subsequently, the Committee on Natural Resources marked up H.R. 2262.

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Subsequently the Committee on Natural Resources marked up H.R. 2262 over one 2-day period and considered countless Republican amendments. Nobody was denied their ability to offer amendments. I repeat: nobody was denied their ability to offer amendments.

The legislation considered at the time was offered to Members and their staffs well ahead of time for ample dissection. I will stack this record up to anyone's with respect to the consideration of the bill by this body. Again, I defend our process as fair, as accountable and as transparent as a process can be in the House of Representatives, just as this legislation is worked and drafted in the same manner.

I urge adoption of this rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, we understand this meaningful reform that's going on, a new 8 percent tax on the industry. We get that. The Republican Party understands that there will be a loss of jobs, loss of manufacturing base in the United States of America. And we know that that's part of the meaningful reform that the new Democrat majority wants and expects. This is not a new subject: taxation, spending at record levels that are taking place by this new Congress, combined with an incredibly poor record on efficiency for the bills that will be signed into law.

That's why the President of the United States has issued his administrative policy from OMB that says they're not going to sign this bill; they're not going to sign this into law because of the loss of industry jobs, the lack of competitiveness that the United States of America will have with hard metals, and the high taxation that would be imposed that will kill the industry.

We get it. Perhaps that's meaningful reform to the Democrat Party. That's loss of jobs, lack of ability for America to be competitive with the world and high taxation. And that's not our idea of good reform.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to notify the gentlewoman from